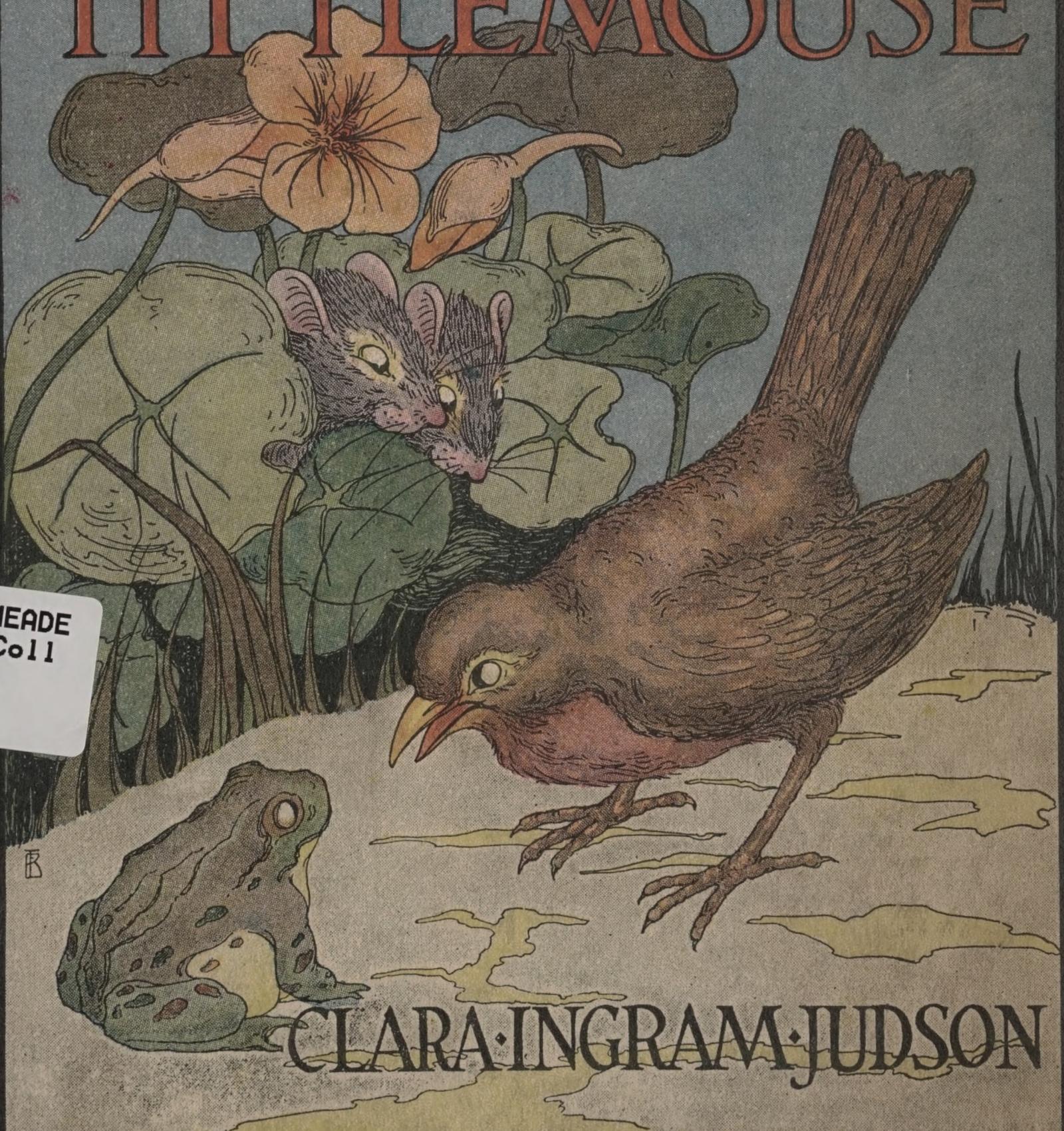


GARDEN ADVENTURES OF TOMMY... TITTLEMOUSE



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GARDEN ADVENTURES OF
TOMMY
TITTLEMOUSE



"What are you going to do this winter, Tommy?" asked Billy Robin

GARDEN ADVENTURES OF TOMMY TITTLEMOUSE

By
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*Author of "Billy Robin and His Neighbors,"
and "Foxy Squirrel in the Garden"*

Pictures by
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THE CONTENTS

	PAGE
TOMMY'S VISITORS	7
TWILIGHT IN THE GARDEN	19
TOMMY MEETS THE TEENY-TINY ANTS	30
IS MR. GARDEN TOAD REALLY LAZY?	41
PLANS FOR THE WINTER	53



"Vain, that's what you're getting, Tommy," laughed his little mate

GARDEN ADVENTURES OF TOMMY TITTLEMOUSE

TOMMY'S VISITORS

TOMMY TITTLEMOUSE stood at the door of his home and looked out over the garden he had learned to love. The grass was deep green and closely cut. The walks were neat and trim. Along the border the nasturtiums sprawled gaily, and close by, the pansies lifted up a crowd of faces as though they were saying, "We're having a good time. Are you?"

Over by the osage orange hedge Foxy Squirrel, who was usually an early riser, was comfortably nibbling his breakfast of green shoots while Mrs. Foxy set the house in order; and from the vegetable garden came sounds of the early morning chat Billy Robin and Chirpy Sparrow always enjoyed.

"Isn't this the nicest place!" exclaimed Tommy, with a sigh of real happiness. "Just imagine our ever having lived in a cellar!"

"Cellar!" said Foxy, who was near enough to hear Tommy's remark in the early stillness of the garden.

"Cellar! Imagine my ever living in the woods! And we just happened to find this garden, we did!"

Mrs. Tommy came to the door just then to listen.

"What shall we do today, Tommy?" she asked.
"Are you hungry?"

"Well," replied Tommy thoughtfully, "I suppose I am. But really, I've had such good eating these days that I'm sure I never again could be as hungry as I used to be when we lived in the cellar. I believe I'm getting fat! I really do."

"Vain, that's what you're getting, Tommy," laughed his little mate teasingly. "You're as vain as Billy—and you know what a primper he is."

Tommy twirled the few hairs of his mustache stylishly and curled his tail to a becoming angle. Mrs. Tommy had guessed pretty close to the truth. He was getting a bit vain and he was quite a little dandy, always being so particular to be brushed and tidy. But he knew perfectly well that Mrs. Tommy liked it even though she did tease. She would n't for anything go back to the days of hunger and misery in the dark, cold cellar.

"He's a good friend of ours, I know that," replied Tommy. "And how about yourself? Are you hungry this morning?"



"You remember what Mrs. Hen told us, Tommy"

"I can't say that I am," replied Mrs. Tommy, "but then, I may be after a while. I usually am, you know. And so are you."

"Then what do you want to do?" asked Tommy, for he could tell very well by her talk and actions that Mrs. Tommy had some plan in her mind.

"You remember what Mrs. Hen, in the chicken yard over across the alley, told us," she said, and Tommy nodded.

Who could forget that Mrs. Hen, the nice motherly person that she was, had invited them to come over

and eat corn out of the chicken house? She had said there was plenty, all ready to eat, and that a person wouldn't have to think of a thing but keeping out of sight and eating—and for a mouse those two things were as easy as anything.

"I can't believe Mrs. Hen knows what she is talking about," said Mrs. Tommy doubtfully, "for it sounds far too good to be true—corn all stacked up ready to eat! But then, she may be right. You never can tell. So I thought while we were n't *very* hungry, we might run over there and see."

"Good idea," said Tommy. "It won't take us more than a morning to go over and see her home. And we have nothing we must do this morning. Let's go."

Mrs. Tommy quickly said, "Yes, let's."

So off they scampered as far as the pansy bed, their first hiding place on the long journey to Mrs. Hen's home.

There they hid, quiet and silent as the pansy faces themselves, for several minutes. And nothing happened.

"I think we can go on now, don't you, Tommy?" whispered Mrs. Tommy softly.

Tommy stuck his sharp little nose and his two beady black eyes out from behind three big white pansy blossoms and looked around. He looked up in the sky—not a

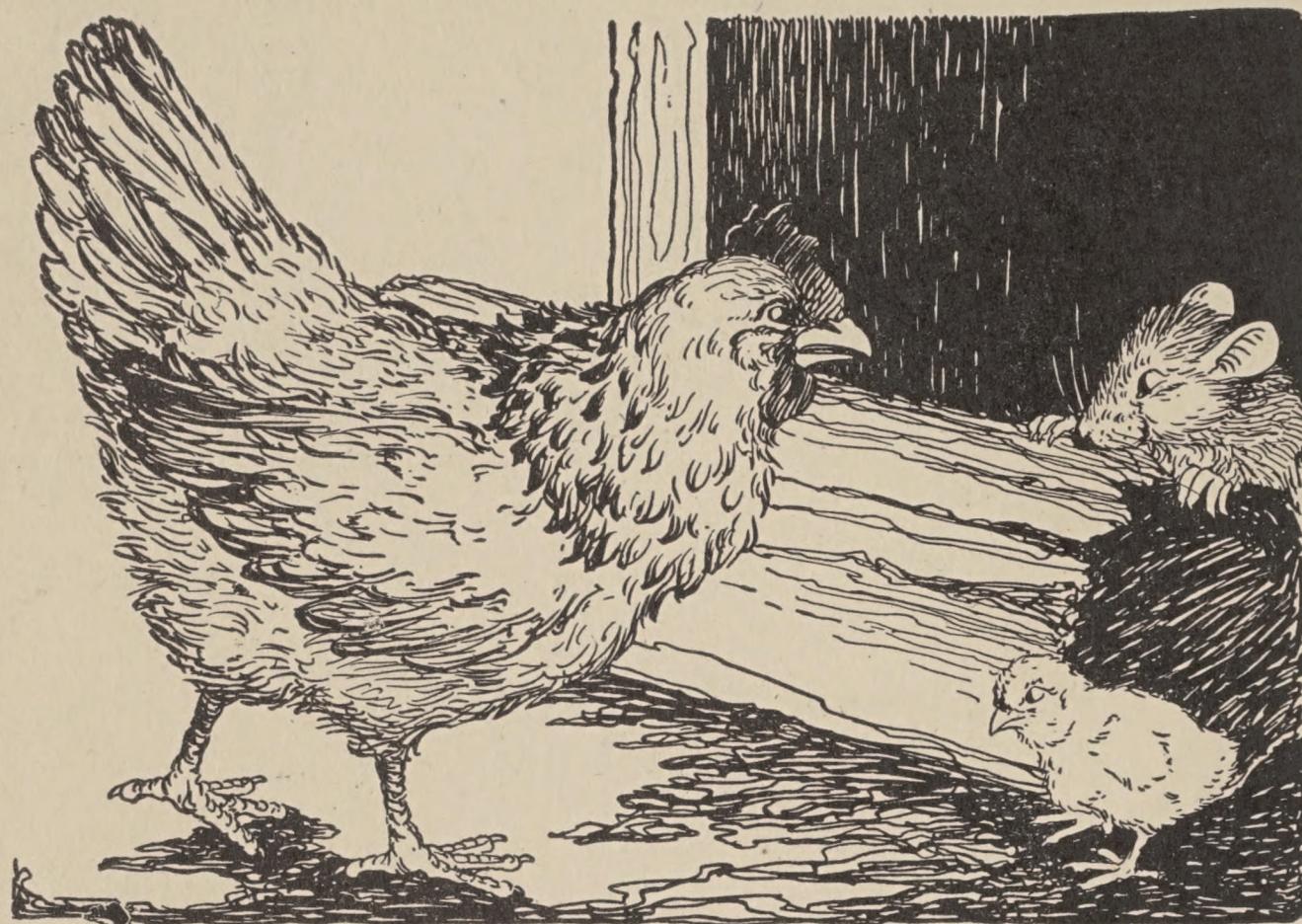


The Tittlemice dashed across the lawn

hawk did he see. He looked around the tree tops — just as he hoped, Old Man Owl was asleep for the day. He looked at the house and across the lawn — nowhere was there a sign of the house cat, his worst enemy.

Then, after being so very careful, Tommy replied, "Everything seems safe. Let's go."

So, keeping close to the pansies as long as they could they dashed across the lawn to the big zinnia bed. And there they waited again and listened and were careful before they ventured on to the cosmos bed halfway down the garden.



"Well, well," she cackled cheerfully, "here you are at last!"

With all that hiding and watching it's no wonder the journey to the alley took a good long time. But it was time well spent. Tommy had no wish to be reckless and run into danger in his beautiful garden, not he.

But finally they reached the alley, and there Tommy was nearly tempted to turn back. For it's one thing to run a long way in a garden set full of flower beds where a mouse may hide, and it's quite another thing to run across a bare, gravelly alley where there is n't one single scrap of shelter.

"But, Tommy," objected Mrs. Tommy when her mate hesitated, "surely nothing will hurt us, and you remember what Mrs. Hen said about that good corn."

Tommy did remember. And by this time he was getting pretty hungry. So, being as brave as brave could be, he whispered, "All right, let's run for it!" And across that wide, open alley he dashed, with Mrs. Tommy only a tail length behind.

And of course nothing happened to them, nothing.

They crept into the woodshed, across the piles of logs, and there they hid till Mrs. Hen's pleasant cackle reminded them that she was very near.

Fortunately for the mice, one of Mrs. Hen's family peeped into the woodshed and she came in to scold.

"Have n't I told you many times to stay out of this shed unless I'm along?" she demanded of Yellow Chick. "How would a youngster like you know how to watch out for rats or weasles, I'd like to know! Come right outside this minute, now, where I can watch you."

And then she spied Tommy peeking around the end of a log.

"Well, well, well," she cackled cheerfully, "here you are at last! I began to think you never were coming. Now just go across the yard and into the hen house and help yourself to corn. It is n't far—right over there."

So, guided by her pointing wing, the two little mice landed safely in the chicken house. And there such food as they did find! Corn, stacks of corn, all piled up ready to eat. Tommy was so excited that he took a nibble here and a nibble there and a nibble, nibble, nibble almost everywhere.

Not so Mrs. Tommy. She carefully looked the pile over and picked out the biggest, fattest, yellowest ear and then sat down by it and began to eat in comfort.

And there those two mice stayed and ate and ate and ate.

Along in the early afternoon Mrs. Tommy said, "Well, Tommy, I'm afraid to eat any more just now for fear I'll burst my skin. I really don't feel a bit hungry. I seem to have lost all appetite. I think I'll take a nap."

But Tommy did n't reply. He was fast asleep in a warm little hollow under the great pile of corn.

Later in the day, when the sun was tossing rose-colored beams into Mrs. Spider's web and when Billy Robin was finishing the last bit of dessert after his afternoon tea, Tommy and his little mate woke up, both at the same time.

"Well, this is a funny place," whispered Tommy in surprise. "Where are we?"



*Such food as they did find! Corn, stacks of corn all piled up
ready to eat*

Mrs. Tommy smoothed her tail, rubbed her well-filled pouch, and remembered.

"We're in the corn crib over in Mrs. Hen's yard, don't you remember?" she said.

"So we are, so we are," replied Tommy. "I think it's about time we went home, I don't seem to be worrying about getting any supper today, do you?"

Mrs. Tommy was n't, not even one little bit. To tell the truth, she did n't think she'd be hungry for a whole day, or maybe two.

"We must tell Mrs. Hen 'thank you' and 'good-by,'" she said, "and then skip home. Old Man Owl will be waking soon, and I want to cross the alley first."

They could n't find Mrs. Hen, for, wise mother that she was, she had put all her children to bed some little time ago. Chickens go to bed early. Maybe that's one reason why they grow so fast, who knows?

"Never mind," said Tommy, when they could n't find Mrs. Hen, "we'll run over soon and thank her."

So the two little mice skipper-scampered home as fast as they could, across the wide, bare alley, from flower bed to flower bed, to the door of their own dear home.

"You stay and talk to Foxy, if you like," said Mrs. Tommy, "while I run in and see that everything is ready for the night."

But in a whisk of her tail she was back again, crouching by Tommy at the doorway.

"Tommy," she whispered breathlessly, "come quickly! Somebody's sleeping in our house!"

"Fiddlesticks!" laughed Tommy. "Nobody'd come to sleep in our house—every one knows it's ours. And anyway, it's all right if somebody is there."

"But, Tommy," insisted Mrs. Tommy, "I don't know who this is. It's two folks. And they're dark and silky, and they're hanging up against the wall at the back of the living room, they are."

Poor Tommy! He thought his little mate must have eaten so much corn that she could n't see straight. Who ever heard of dark, silky creatures hanging on a living-room wall? Any person with sense would know no one would do such a thing. Silly! But just to humor his little mate he went back to look.

And there, sure enough, hanging on the living-room wall, were two dark, silky looking creatures, apparently sound asleep. Did a mouse ever hear of such a strange happening? Certainly Tommy never had!

"Good evening, Tommy," said a soft little voice, "I thought you'd be coming home some time." And as he said that, one of the creatures unhooked one claw from the living-room wall and unwrinkled a silky,

beautiful wing, waving it gently as though to make sure it was rested and ready for use.

"He called me Tommy," thought the little mouse to himself hastily, "and he seems to know this is my house. Now he can't be an enemy, but who in the world is he?"

Out loud he said politely, "Yes, you may be sure we would come home sometime. Have you been here long?"

"Only since morning," replied the visitor, as though that was a very short time. "We were looking for a nice dark place to sleep and we found this. We're so tired of trees and barns! A change is good sometimes. I guess, if you don't mind, we'll live here a while." And to Tommy's dismay, the other creature, too, began to wake up and to make signs of feeling at home. Who were these folks who had moved in? And how long were they likely to stay? Tommy would like to know.



TWILIGHT IN THE GARDEN

IT'S A very queer feeling to come into your own house and find some one staying there—some one who seems to be quite at home and who is quite settled and comfortable, and whose name, even, you don't know. Tommy felt strange as he saw the two visitors unfurl their queer wings, stretch, and look about the dim living room in his dear log home, while all the time he was wondering who in the world they might be.

There was n't much time left for wondering, either, for night time was coming fast and it would n't be long before Tommy and his little mate would want to be tucked in tight in their cozy nest way back in the darkest corner of their home. So Tommy plucked up every bit of courage he had ready to ask a question.

"If you don't mind," he said politely, "will you please tell me who you are?"

"Who I am?" asked the visitor in amazement.
"Don't you know your own relative?"

Tommy was much mortified, for even mice really might be expected to know their own relatives, he felt sure of that. But all the same he did n't know his visitor, and there was no use pretending.

"I'm very, very sorry," he said humbly, "but truly I don't know you. I didn't even know I had any relatives, unless, perhaps, that old gray rat over in the neighbor's barn is a connection of mine. Mr. Garden Toad says he must be, but I've never been very proud to claim him, for he has such bad manners."

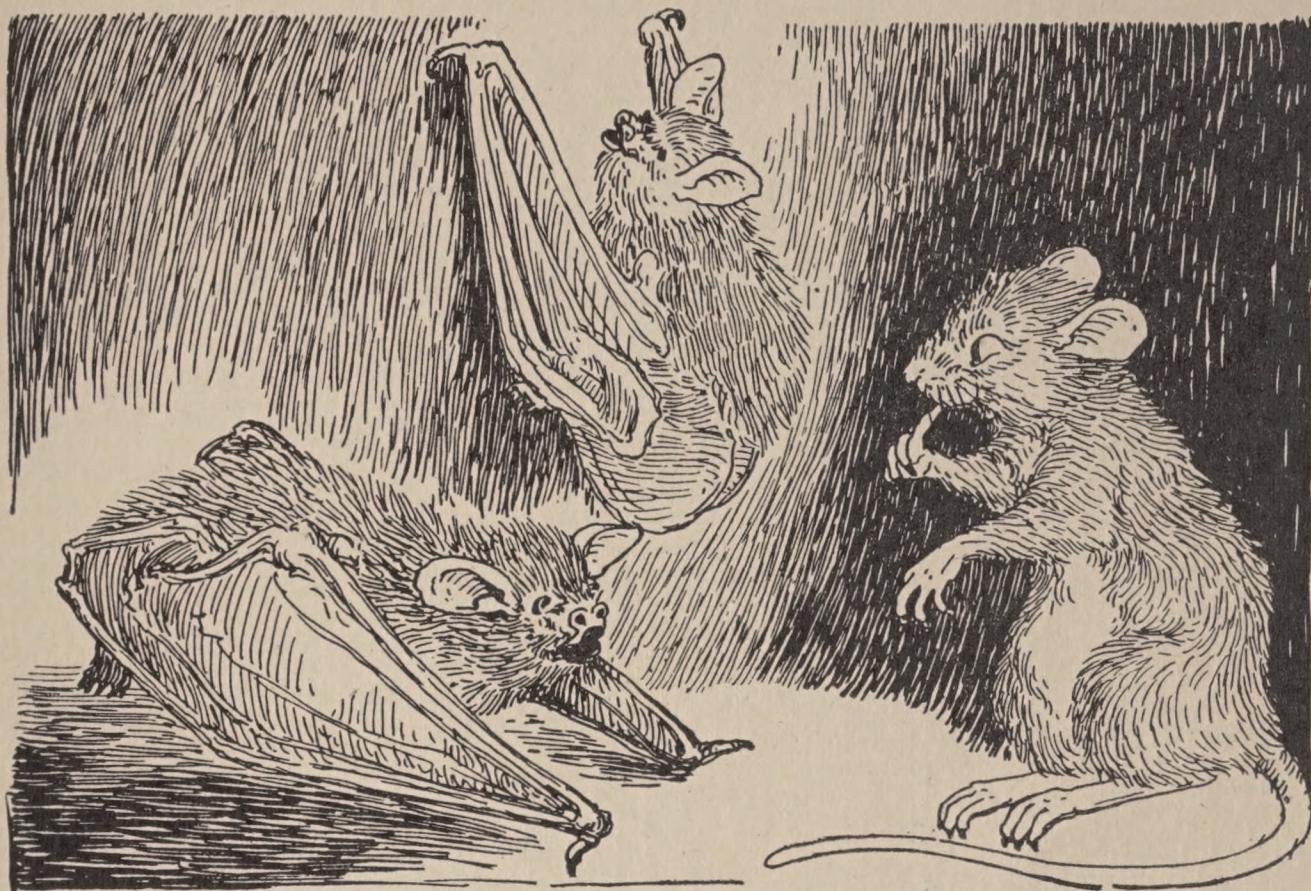
"I don't wonder at that," replied the unknown relative kindly. "I don't like him myself. I've heard he's a greedy, bad-mannered thief. But you won't be ashamed of us. We're your cousins, the Bat family. I'm Bingy, Bingy Bat, if you please."

"Bingy Bat!" exclaimed Mrs. Tommy, who seemed to feel that if these folks were relatives she might as well begin talking herself. "Why, I thought bats were queer folks who fly around in the evening."

"So we are," admitted Bingy. "Being queer does n't keep us from being relatives. Lots of relatives are queer. And we do fly around in the evening."

"But we mice don't have any wings to fly with," insisted Mrs. Tommy. "I don't see how you can be related to us mice and have wings like a bird."

Now all the time the mice and bat had been talking the outside world had been getting dimmer and dimmer, day creatures were all safely in their homes, sound asleep—all but the Tittlemice. And they were in their home,



We're your cousins, the Bat family

to be sure, but a long, long way from being asleep. And the dimmer and dimmer the living room of Tommy's house grew, the more and more wide awake the two visitor bats seemed to get, just as though they liked the dark better than the light. Finally, just as Mrs. Tommy spoke about wings, Bingy unfurled his right wing, shook it gently, then hooked himself up by a sharp claw right where his thumb ought to be, and loosened the left wing and gave it a gentle shake.

"I do declare!" he said half to himself, "it feels good to wake up in the evening. Wings!" he added, noticing

Mrs. Tommy's remark. "Oh, we don't have wings with feathers like birds have, to be sure! We should n't know what to do with feathers; they take up so much room. But we do have wings — dainty, silky wings. See?"

He spread out a great graceful wing for Mrs. Tommy to see. She and Tommy looked at it carefully. It was pretty, there was no doubt of that. Fine, tiny bones, as small and as tough as wires stretched out to make a framework. Over this was laid a soft, dark skin, silky and smooth and strong. That was the bat's wing.

"Are n't they pretty?" asked Bingy proudly.

"And you should see how fast we can fly," added Mrs. Bingy, who by this time was wide awake and stretching her wings, too. "Not even birds can dart as swiftly as we can or change their direction so quickly. Though sometimes we do miss it," she added.

"That means a story," suggested Tommy hopefully. "I just know it does."

"Well, yes," admitted Bingy sheepishly. "It's the story of how I got my name."

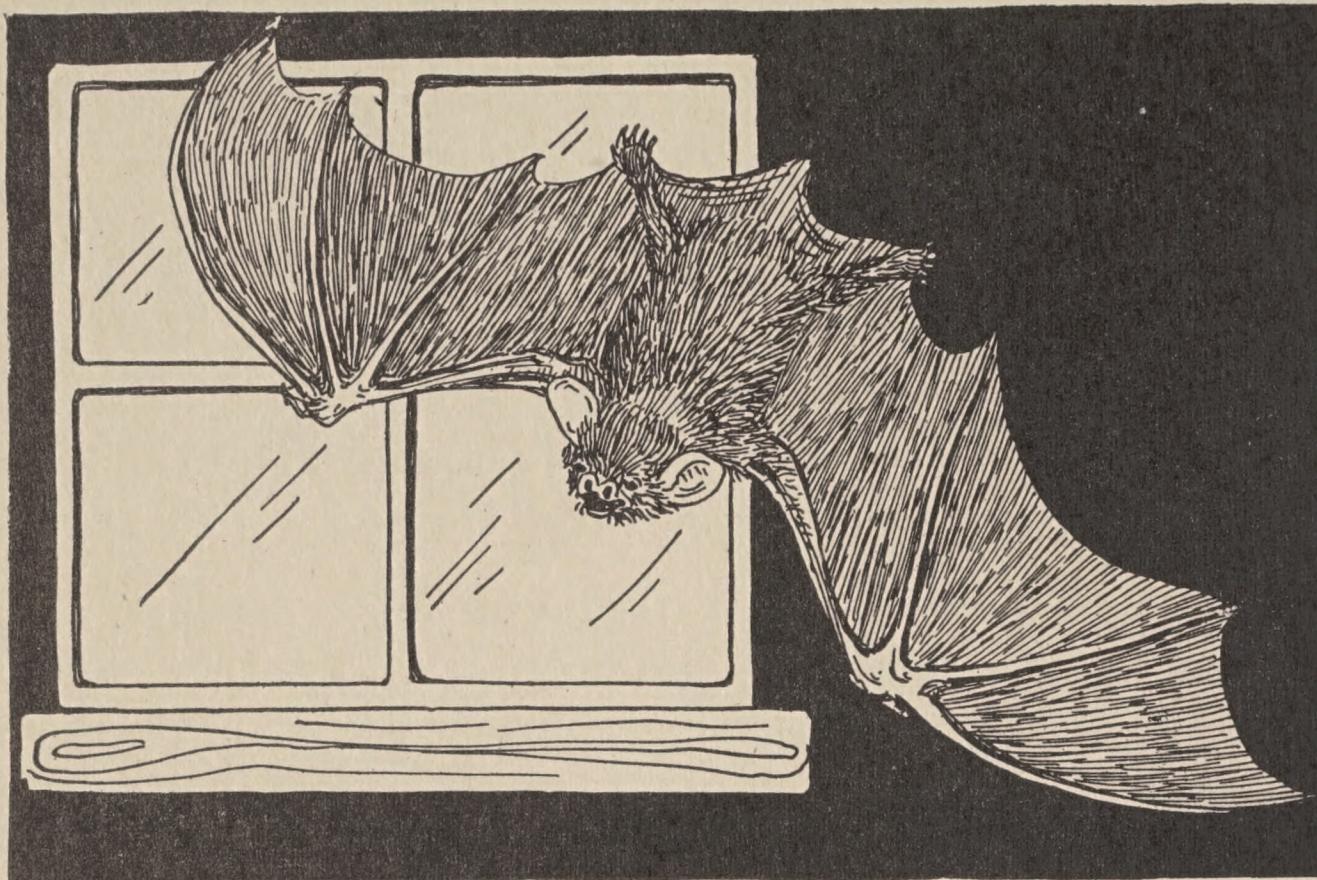
"I just knew there was a story about that," said Mrs. Tommy happily. "Folks don't have a queer name like Bingy without a story, I'm sure. Now tell us."

Bingy hooked himself up by two hooks instead of one, so he could be perfectly comfortable, and then he began.

"Once upon a time I did n't have any name," he said, "only just, of course, my family name, Bat, but there were so many bats that the name Bat did n't count very much. Then one night after I had learned to fly very well some of us were exploring around to see what we could see. We flew here and there and everywhere, all over the woods and garden, till suddenly, right before me, I saw a great big house. Oh, but it was big and black! And right in the center was a great big white eye. I knew it was an eye because it was so bright and staring in the darkness all around the house. But some of the older bats said it was a window with a light inside, and that I should n't go near. I thought them silly folks, and straight for that bright eye I flew. I meant to find out all about it. But, the closer I got to that bright thing the less I could see. Some folks say we are blind, we bats. Of course we're not. We have eyes that see much as you do. But bright lights make us seem blind, for they dazzle us so we can't see.

"If I could have seen, I should have found out that the older bat was right—the queer, bright thing really was a window. But I could n't see for the brightness. So I flew at it, hard and straight, till—bing!—I hit it hard as could be, and hurt myself, too, I must say!"

"But what happened next?" asked Tommy.



The older bat was right, the queer, bright thing really was a window

"Oh, that's about all," replied the bat good-naturedly. "I picked myself up—no bones broken—and flew back into the night to find my friends. They teased me a lot for not knowing a window when I saw it, and ever since have called me 'Bingy' because of the noise I made hitting that window glass. But I must say that I'm not the only bat that has made the same mistake."

"Isn't it about time we started out for some supper?" suggested Mrs. Bingy. "We can tell stories some other time, and I'm nearly starved."

"If you're hungry, I'll tell you just where to go," suggested Tommy generously. "Across the alley lives Mrs. Hen, and in her chicken house you'll find piles and piles of beautiful yellow corn all ready for eating."

"Ho, ho!" laughed the bat good-naturedly, "that's a joke on you, Tommy. Bats don't eat corn. We have n't the kind of teeth to chew corn with. Now with your fine, sharp teeth, corn is just right. But we eat bugs—all sort of insects—and our teeth are made for that kind of food."

"And a good thing it is, too," added Mrs. Bingy, "for if we did n't work hard every night of our lives, there would be so many dangerous insects about that the flower beds and the trees and the lawns and the whole garden would be eaten up; it really would."

"But how do you catch insects?" asked Tommy curiously. "They always seem to go so very fast."

"To be sure they do," laughed the bat, "only we can go faster. Just you watch us when we get outside. We're clumsy and slow in here, maybe, while you dart about as fast as you please. But just let us get out of doors in the twilight and we can dart here and there in the air faster than you can go on the ground."

"And instead of talking here all night," interrupted Mrs. Bingy, "we must start working."

"Then I'll show you a nice place," suggested Tommy.
"Just follow me and I'll take you to the pansy bed."

Tommy darted to the door even before Bingy had a chance to say that he could look after himself very well, thank you. But Tommy went no farther than the door. For just as he reached there he had a warning.

From outside, by the big log on the side away from the osage orange hedge, came a loud cry.

"Lie low! Lie low! Lie low!" a voice said.

"That's for you," said Bingy, who seemed to understand. "Excuse us, please, and we'll fly along." And out of the little log home he darted, with his mate following close behind.

The watcher who had shouted, thinking his warning had n't been understood, shouted again.

"Lie low! Lie low! Lie low! Low! Low!"

Clear up to the doorway of his home little Tommy Tittlemouse crept. It was n't fair not to tell such a good friend what had happened.

"Friend Cricket," he whispered, "this is Tommy."

"Lie low! Lie low! Lie low!" answered the cricket sharply. "Owl's out! Owl's out! Owl's out!"

"Thank you for warning me in time," whispered Tommy gratefully. "When you called, I was just going to show my cousins the pansy bed."



"Lie low! Lie low!" answered the cricket, "Owl's out! Owl's out!"

"And goodness knows what might have happened then," squeaked Mrs. Tommy in terror, "if you had n't called just at that minute. In this darkness an owl could swoop around and have a poor little mouse eaten up before any one would know what had happened. You're surely a good friend to have," said Mrs. Tommy proudly. "I feel so safe when I know you are around."

The cricket started to answer, for he liked to talk to the friendly little mice. But just then he saw a shadow dart to the osage orange hedge close by—only a dark shadow, but the cricket knew that shadow really was Old Man Owl hidden by the heavy foliage of the trees.

"Lie low! Lie low!" he chirped. "Lie low!"

The two little mice were frightened to death. Never before had the owl been so close. And they could n't see him, that was the worst of it. Things one cannot see always do seem much worse than things that are in plain sight, as we very well know. The mice did n't dare go back to their nest. They hardly dared breathe. They just crouched down close in the shadow of the doorway and there they stayed without a sound or a move.

Then soon there was a soft whirr from the osage orange hedge over toward the pine tree. But Tommy did n't venture to move even then. He wanted to make sure.



"Lie low! Lie low! Lie low!" advised the cricket softly. So the mice kept still.

Then presently from the pine tree came the soft, mournful call of the owl. "Who-o-o? Who-o-o? who-o-o-o-o-o-o?"

Tommy hadn't an idea whom the owl was calling. But he knew the old fellow had gone from the hedge and that he and his mate were safe. So, softly and carefully, they crept back into bed. Wasn't it fine to have a nice dark, safe home to stay in? And weren't they lucky to have had such a fine day? And—

But before Tommy could even think of any more nice things he was fast asleep.

TOMMY MEETS THE TEENY-TINY ANTS

IGUESS I'll fly over and see what Tommy is doing," said Billy Robin to himself the next afternoon. "I have n't visited with Tommy for a long time."

He flew over near the pansy bed and then hopped three big, robin sort of hops that planted him squarely in front of the log in which Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Tittlemouse lived. Billy was very much pleased to see that Tommy was right there in the doorway of his home, so he promptly said, "Good afternoon."

Tommy did n't answer.

"Now that's a funny thing," said Billy, much puzzled. "That is n't like Tommy not to hear a friend. I wonder if something has happened. I guess I'd better see."

So he hopped another hop, a little hop, for he was already so close there was n't room for a big hop.

"*Good* afternoon, Tommy," he said, in his loudest, cheerfulest voice. "How are you this fine afternoon?"

"Goodness! What a start you did give me, Billy!" exclaimed Tommy.

"I'm not at all comfortable," he added, replying to Billy's question, "and I had n't noticed that it was a fine afternoon."



"Goodness! What a start you did give me, Billy!"

"Dear me!" cried Billy. "Had n't noticed—you must be in trouble! What's the matter? Can I help you?"

"I don't know," replied Tommy. "You see, it's this way," and then he told Billy all about it.

That morning after the bats had come home and gone to sleep—for the bat cousins were still living in the old log—Tommy had gone out for his breakfast and Mrs. Tommy had stayed inside to work on the passage she was making to the other end of the log. She had worked hard and when she finished the work on the passage, she had cleaned up the whole living room.

"There was n't a speck anywhere," interrupted Mrs. Tommy when Tommy reached that point in the story.

"And then she went out for her luncheon," continued Tommy, "and found me. We played around a while, then she asked me to come and see how she had fixed the passage, and I did. And just look what I saw!"

Billy craned his neck and tried to see something startling, but not a thing could be seen—not a thing. Of course his eyes were n't made for looking into dark logs, as Tommy's were, and that made some difference.

"Well, was n't everything all right?" he asked, for it was plain Tommy expected him to say something.

"All right?" demanded Tommy, "indeed not. Just look at that!"

Billy looked again and, now that his eyes had become more used to looking into the dark log, he saw a nice big crumb just inside the doorway of Tommy's house.

"It's a crumb," said Billy. "Is n't it a good crumb?"

"It may be good or bad, for all I care," replied Tommy. "It probably was dropped by the little girl who comes into the garden sometimes to eat her bread and butter. But she did n't drop it in my log. Who did? How did it get in my house? Who's been making crumbs in my doorway, that's what I want to know."

"Oh, I see," said Billy, suddenly understanding. "You don't mind the crumb, but you do want to know how it got there. Well, probably an ant put it there."

"An ant!" exclaimed Tommy. "One of those little creatures could n't carry a crumb as big as that."

"It's plain you don't know much about ants," laughed Billy. "You should use your eyes for something besides corn and cats, Tommy Tittlemouse."

"That crumb was very likely dropped outside of your doorway. There some ant found it and tried to take it home to his city. It is rather a big load, so likely the ant has gone for help. And for fear somebody else might eat up the crumb while he was gone, the ant managed to carry it into the shelter of your doorway.

"If you sit very still, no doubt you'll soon see three or four ants coming back and you can watch them roll that crumb off to their city.

"I'd eat it up myself," added Billy, "for I like crumbs. But I'll leave it and you see if I am not right."

"My, how much you do know, Billy!" exclaimed Mrs. Tommy, much impressed with Billy's learning.

That made Billy feel very happy.

"Oh, thank you," he said with becoming modesty, "no more than a robin should know, though. And now I guess I'll fly away and get my afternoon tea."



*A procession of four little ants rolled the crumb over and over
up to the door sill*

Before Tommy could beg him to stay and tell more about ants, Billy was gone.

But the two little mice took his advice. They hid in the shadowy corner of the living room and waited.

Before very long, one little ant appeared over the doorsill, and then another and another and another till a procession of four little ants paraded up to that crumb. They managed some way to roll the crumb over and over till it was up to the sill, over the sill, down the little slope to the grass, over the grass to the corner of the log, and there it slipped out of sight down a hole. Tommy saw, for he crept behind the ants and watched.

"Well, if that is n't the queerest thing!" he said to Mrs. Tommy as they watched the four ants, one after the other, slip down the hole behind the crumb. "Do you suppose they have been getting food like that all the time and we never noticed?"

Mrs. Tommy thought a minute.

"I expect they have," she finally decided. "I seem to remember seeing ants around, and surely they must have to eat something—everybody does. Though I must say I never thought of it before."

"Nor I," admitted Tommy. "I wish I knew more about them. I wonder whom we could ask?"

"Mrs. Spider?" suggested Mrs. Tommy.

"Perhaps we'd better not," said Tommy thoughtfully. "Maybe spiders eat ants or ants eat spiders — you never can tell about those insect folks. Let's ask Mr. Garden Toad. He always sits still and sees things."

But just as they ran out of their doorway to find Mr. Garden Toad, whom should they see but Mr. Snail peeking out of his shell just as friendly as you please.

"May you always have plenty to eat," said the snail politely.

"Thank you very much," said Tommy, "that's a nice wish. And we'll be getting our supper in a few minutes. But first we want to learn something about ants. Can you tell us?"

"Ants?" asked the snail. "You mean the little ants who live in the city just around your log?"

"I mean the ants who live there," replied Tommy, "but I don't know anything about a city. I never heard of such a thing as a city by our log."

"Then it's plain to see you don't know much about ants," laughed the snail. "If you'll let me draw my house up close to the shelter of your doorway where I'll not be likely to be seen, I can tell you about your neighbors."

The mice said not a word while the careful snail pulled his dainty little house close up into the shadow



They saw Mr. Snail peeking out of his shell as friendly as you please

of the log. Then very carefully he pushed his house back, back, till he could see out very comfortably.

"There," he said, "that's safer. Now about those ants—they all live together in the city under the ground.

"And I must say they are good citizens. I never heard an ant quarrel or say an unkind word to any member of his family or even to anybody who lives in his city. That's a very good record, seems to me."

"Dear me," said Tommy, "I should say it is!"

"And then," continued the snail, "they all work very hard. That's why they are sometimes called 'Worker Ants'—they work from morning till night and

seem to love it. Oh, to be sure, there are a few who never do a thing, not a single thing. But they soon starve to death and nobody minds. Serves them right, the lazy things! The ants are far too busy to bother with feeding great lazy ants who won't work."

"But you talk all the time about working," said Mrs. Tommy, who was somewhat of a worker herself. "What do they find to do all the time? They just have a little house in the ground, and they can't eat much food, they're so tiny. I don't see what they find to do."

"Well, you don't know much," laughed the snail. "There's plenty to do and more. First there is their city to make and care for. And such a city it is! Long passages, galleries and galleries all to be made and kept clean and in repair, to say nothing of guarding the city every minute against attacking ants from some other city.

"And then think of all the ant babies," continued the snail, "thousands of ant babies all to be fed and washed and tended, for ant babies are very helpless little things, and not only must be tended and fed but must be moved every time the nursery gets too hot or too cold, and must be helped out of their cradles just the very minute they happen to be big enough to want to get out. Oh, it's a big job those ant nurses have!"



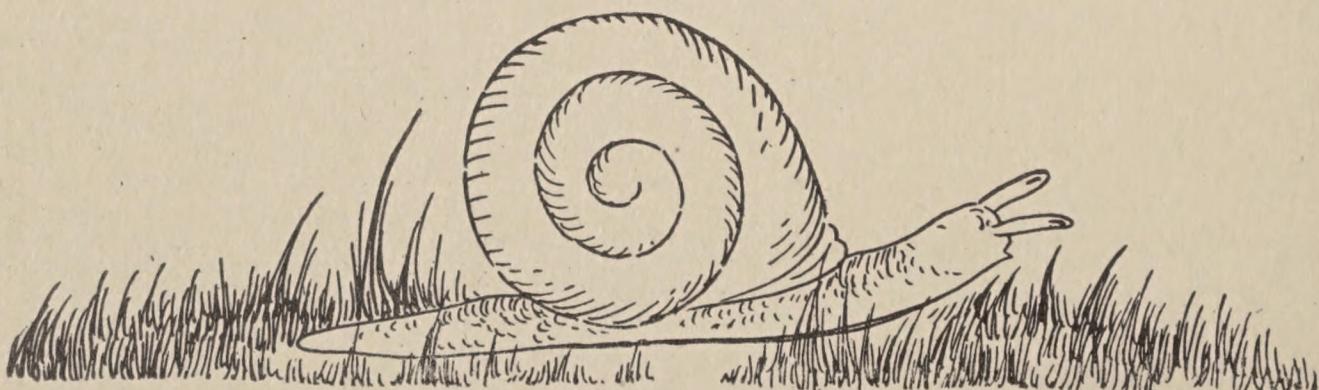
"Well, you don't know much," laughed the snail

"What do they eat?" asked Tommy. Food was an interesting subject, especially near supper time.

"That I don't know," said the snail. "Oh, to be sure, they eat crumbs when they can get them. But I know they eat something else, something that looks like honey, and they like it very much. Many a time I have seen them carrying it into their city. But what it is and where they get it, I don't know. Perhaps Mr. Garden Toad knows."

Tommy started to say, "We'll run right over and ask him," when he happened to notice how late it was. He had been having such a good time visiting and learning that he hadn't noticed the sun slipping off to bed and the twilight spreading over the sky. If he was to have any supper he would have to hurry, for soon the Old man Owl would be snooping about and the garden would be no place for a mouse.

So he thanked the snail and resolved to hunt up the garden toad first thing in the morning.



IS MR. GARDEN TOAD REALLY LAZY?

BRIGHT and early next morning the two Tittlemice were up and stirring. They wanted to get breakfast over and tidy the house in a jiffy so they could have a good long day for talking to the garden toad.

But their hurry did n't do them much good, for when they reached the zinnia bed where the toad very often slept he was still sleeping soundly. Of course they were too polite to waken him, and there they had to stay, till Mr. Garden Toad waked up.

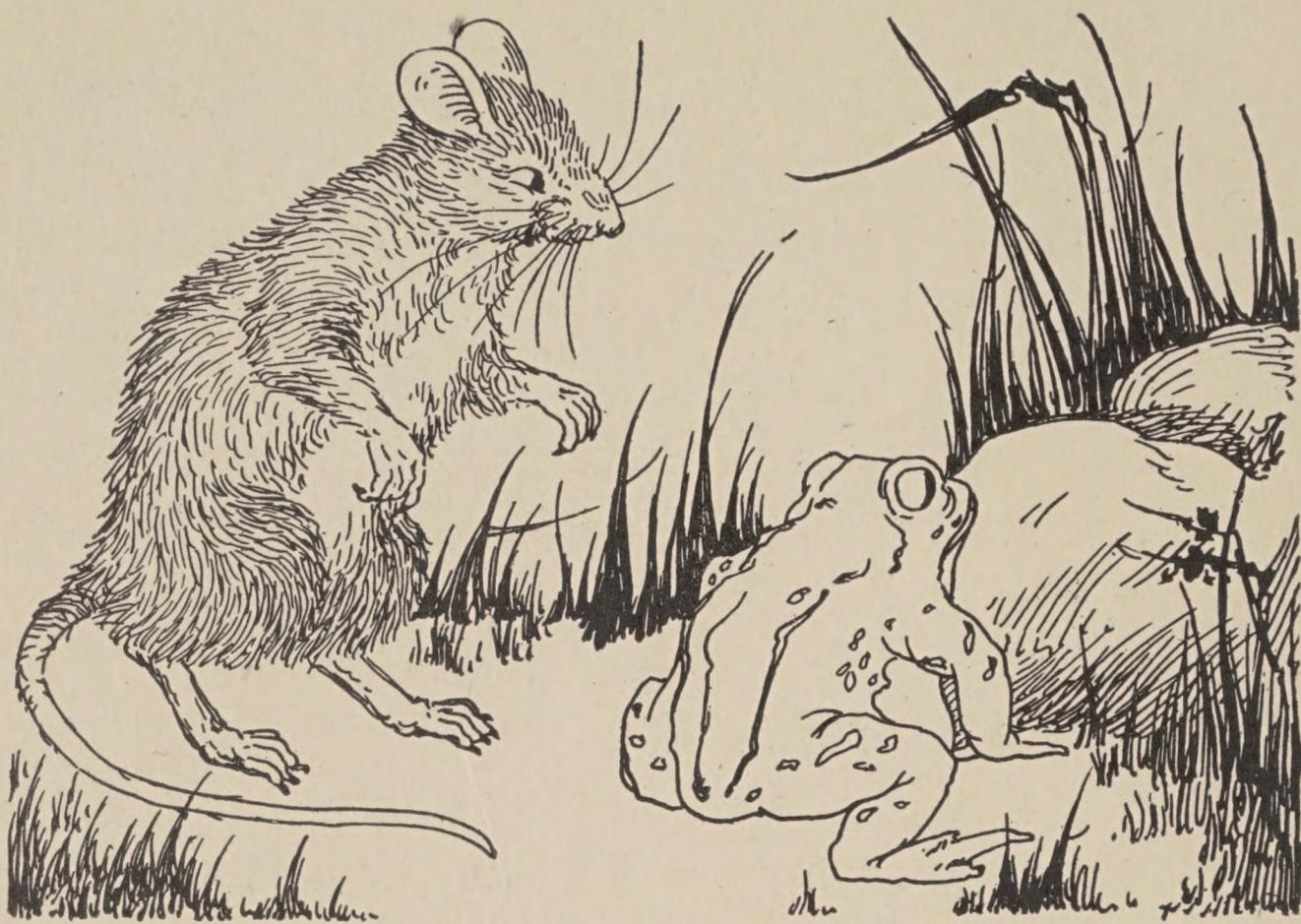
"Well, well, well!" he said pleasantly when he spied his visitors. "Just see who's come to call on me this morning. Now what can I do for you today?"

For he very well knew, wise old toad that he was, that no two mice would have come to visit him and would have waited around till he waked up unless they wanted something.

"You can tell us what ants eat," said Tommy promptly.

"I can, I can, I can," croaked the toad, "you're right, I can. But whatever in the world made you want to know what ants eat? Tell me that! Tell me that!"

So Tommy told him all about finding the crumb in their doorway, about seeing the four ants roll it around



The toad hopped over in front of the big stone

the corner and into a hole in the ground, and about all the snail had told them of the ants.

"And very right Mr. Snail was," said the toad, when Tommy had finished. "Very right, very right. That little snail is wise. He tells what he knows and nothing more, nothing more. A very wise plan is that, very."

"But I don't care to settle down for a talk here in the zinnia bed," added the toad. "It's well enough to sleep here, but for daytime I prefer to sit in the sun."

"But we can't sit out in the sun," objected Mrs. Tommy. "Somebody might come by and eat us up."

"That would never do, never do, never do," agreed the toad thoughtfully.

"Suppose I sit here by the big stone," he suggested. "It will warm my back and keep off the breezes, and I shall be right in the hot sun. Then you can snuggle down under the nasturtium leaves, and you can hear all I say and nobody will ever guess you are near."

So the mice slipped, one at a time, over to the nasturtium border, and the toad hopped over in front of the big stone. And true enough, just as the toad had said, nobody ever in the world would have guessed that the sleepy-looking old toad had visitors.

"There now, there now," said the toad, when they were all settled nicely, "you want to know what the ants eat, what they eat."

Tommy squeaked, "Yes." To tell the truth the toad's habit of saying words over and over bothered him sometimes. But everybody knows that's just one of the toad's habits and one has to get used to it. Saying things over and over does give the old fellow more time to think, that's true, and maybe that is how he happens to be thought so very wise.

"Ants eat honey," said the toad, "sweet honey. And it's so good that no wonder they like it very well, very well."

Then he went on to tell the two mice all about the ants having cows—not really truly big cows like folks have, but tiny little green creatures called aphids, which are ant cows. These aphids live on green plants. Tommy recalled having seen them on pansy plants or in the rose garden, though of course he never even wondered what they were or what they did.

The ants take care of these little aphids—take them from plant to plant so they can make the sweetest honey. And then they stroke them gently and get tiny drops of sweetest honey from the little creatures. Some of this honey the ants eat right away; some they carry home and feed to the ant babies in the nurseries in the ant city.

Tommy was so surprised he could hardly believe what the toad said. Ants having cows, ants eating honey, ants carrying food home to babies just as mice and squirrels do! If Tommy had n't known Mr. Garden Toad was an honest old fellow who always told the truth, he would have had hard work to believe his own ears.

While the mice were listening and the toad was talking, Tommy noticed two buzzing flies going round and round in the sunshine right over Mr. Garden Toad's head.



I'm not afraid of a lazy toad, said the fly

"Better watch out," remarked one fly. "Can't you see that toad sitting right there?"

"Yes, I see him," laughed the fly foolishly, "but I'm not afraid of a toad, great fat, lazy thing! He never could catch me."

"My, my! What a silly way to talk," thought Tommy. "I wonder what the toad will do? That silly little fly ought to watch out."

Tommy watched the toad carefully, but not a sign could he see that the toad had heard the fly. He just sat there as still as still. And if he opened his mouth

a crack—well, who does n’t open his mouth once in a while?

Tommy looked up at the flies again and he could hardly believe his eyes! Only *one* fly was buzzing around in the sunshine over the old toad’s head. And that one fly was hunting and buzzing and calling for his partner. But no partner answered.

Tommy was about to ask the toad where the fly had gone when the old toad opened his mouth—Tommy thought, to say something more about the ants.

But no, the toad must have changed his mind, for he said no word. So Tommy looked up again at the one lone fly. But there was n’t any fly at all. It was certainly most mysterious.

“Now, let’s see,” said Mr. Garden Toad, “we were talking about the ants”—just that way, as though he had been thinking about something else.

Before Tommy could answer he spied two buzzing gnats whirling in the air right over the toad’s head.

“Now I’m going to watch those gnats,” thought Tommy. “I’ve heard that toads eat flies and gnats, but of course they don’t. Lazy Mr. Garden Toad never in the world could catch a swift-moving little creature like one of those gnats. I may not know much about ants, but I do know that much about toads.”



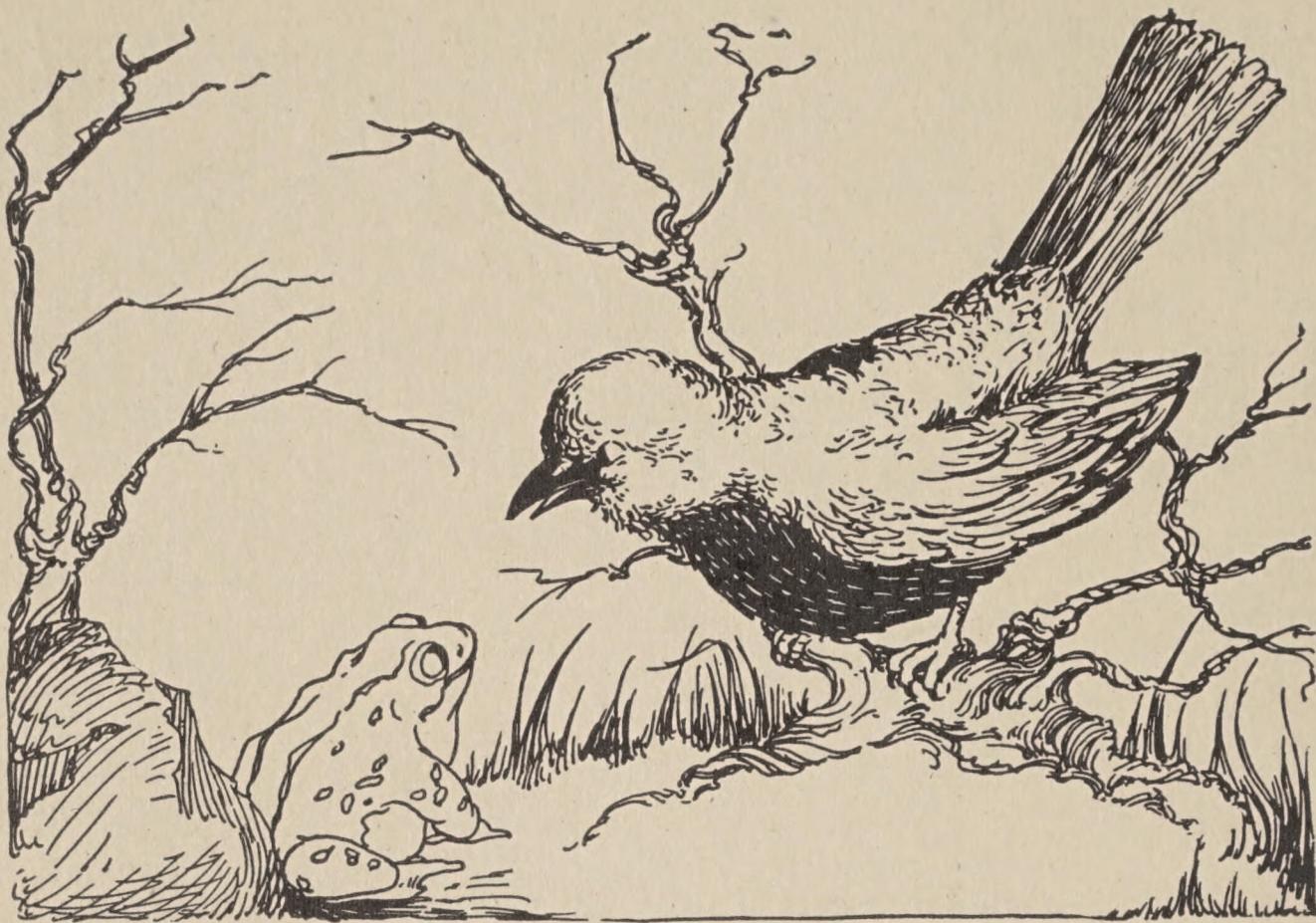
Only one fly was buzzing around over the old toad's head

Tommy watched the gnats carefully—till suddenly they were n't there. First they were flying around in the sun gaily, and then all at once they were n't, though Tommy was certain he would have seen them if they had flown away. It was very puzzling.

But the toad was talking.

"Is there anything more about ants that you would like to ask me, Tommy?" he was saying kindly.

"Er-r, why, er-r," began Tommy, but for the life of him he could n't think of a thing to say. For he had been thinking so hard about those flies and gnats and



"Why don't you stir around and get some exercise?" said Billy"

about where they all mysteriously disappeared so suddenly, that he could n't recall what the toad had told him about ants or where they left off talking.

"You're not listening, not listening, not listening," croaked the toad.

Mrs. Tommy looked at her little mate in distress. What could be the matter? Here they had waited all night to ask about the ants. They had found the toad and had been greeted kindly with all the information they could ask for. And Tommy was n't polite enough to listen. She was so ashamed she could n't speak.

But the toad did n't seem to think Tommy had done any very dreadful thing. Wise old fellow that he was, he seemed to understand that Tommy must have got to thinking about something else, something even more important or interesting than ants and their queer ways.

Much to Mrs. Tommy's relief, Billy Robin alighted on the gravel walk close by and called good morning.

"How you ever stand it to sit there all morning and never eat a bite," he said, "is more than I can see. You just sit and sit and sit. And yet you get fatter every day of your life. Why don't you stir around and get some exercise?"

"Exercise!" croaked the toad. "What do I want with that?"

"Well, it would give you an appetite," retorted Billy, "and you could hurry around and get food."

"Listen to him, listen to him, listen to him," laughed the toad. "I'm hungry all the time. If 'I was any hungrier I could n't stand it."

Tommy, hidden under the nasturtiums, stared, and Billy stopped hunting worms and looked at the toad in amazement.

"If you're hungry," said Billy, "why don't you hustle around and get food? I'd never sit and do nothing if I was hungry, not I."



Billy Robin was so surprised he stopped squarely and looked
at the toad

"Nor do I, nor do I," replied the toad. "I sit and work all the day long. A nice garden this would be, all overrun with lazy, troublesome insects, if I hopped around as you tell me to. A lot of food I'd get if I hopped around and scared away the flies and bugs. My, how much you folks do know!"

Billy Robin was so surprised he stopped squarely and looked at the toad, while Tommy almost forgot to look for danger, he wanted so much to get out where he could hear every word.

"You folks talk as though I sat here just because I'm lazy," said the toad scornfully. "I sit here because I'm working, I'm working all the day, all the day, all the day. Since you've been here, Billy, I've eaten three flies and four gnats, though I venture to say you've seen not a one, not a one, not a one."

"Just since we've been talking?" exclaimed Billy.

"Just since we've been talking, talking, talking," answered the toad.

"Then you certainly are a wonderful creature," said Billy with vim, while Tommy echoed in his mind the same thought.

"Would you tell us how you do it?" asked Billy.

"I sit still, just so still," said the toad, "so still you all think I'm lazy. Then when some insect I want

comes near, I dart out my quick-moving tongue and before that creature knows I'm awake, he's all eaten up, eaten up, eaten up."

"Then you really are working hard when you seem to be sitting in the sun," said Tommy.

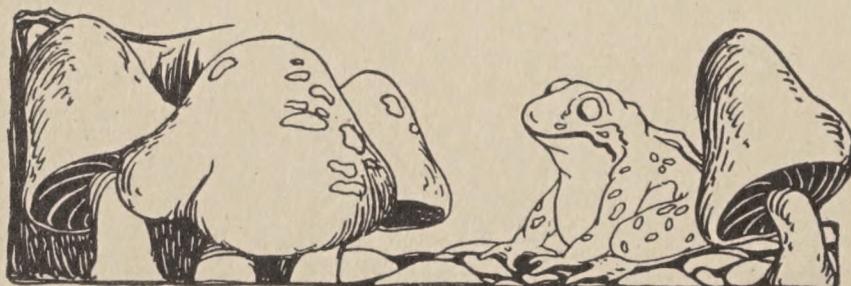
"To be sure, to be sure, to be sure," replied the toad, "and if I do say it who should n't, I'm a very useful person. Think how overrun the garden would be with silly, harmful insects if I went hopping about giving them a chance to get out of my way. Things are n't always what they seem," said the toad, "not always what they seem."

"Right you are, Mr. Garden Toad," said Billy.

"I'm so glad I came this morning," said Tommy.

"So am I," added Mrs. Tommy, "only now I must go and attend to some work."

And before Tommy could ask her what the work was or where, she was gone.



PLANS FOR THE WINTER

IN THE garden days and days passed, each day a little shorter than the one before.

The leaves and flowers changed, too. Blossoms were scarcer. Only the chrysanthemums had many buds, and every one knows chrysanthemums bloom almost till Thanksgiving, snow or no snow. Blossoms changed to seed pods, and every time the wind blew hard, dozens of tiny seeds rattled down in the pansy bed, the zinnia bed, and among the withered poppy stalks.

"What you going to do this winter, Tommy?" asked Billy Robin one fine crisp morning as he hunted over the dried-up garden for a worm for his breakfast.

"Stay in the log, to be sure," replied Tommy promptly, without a minute's thought. "Where do you stay?"

"I don't think I'll stay," replied Billy thoughtfully. "Some of my family do, and I hear they get along very well. But cold and snow and winds don't sound very good to me. I always fly to the South. There it's warm and sunny and there is plenty of food. And anyway, I like the journey. I like to see the world."

"But you won't go away for good, will you, Billy?" asked Tommy in distress.



"Maybe we ought to move back into the cellar"

"I should say not," answered Billy. "I love this garden as well as you do. I'll be back next spring. But never you mind," he added, as he saw Tommy looking so very sorrowful, "I have n't gone yet. I'll tell you good-by before I go, never fear." And he flew away to find more food.

Left to himself, Tommy began to think about winter. What had he and his mate better do? When he told Billy that he would stay in the old log, he had spoken hastily, for he had never really thought about winter and what plans he should make. He must talk it over

with Mrs. Tommy and they must decide, so as not to be caught napping.

At the very same time that Tommy and Billy were talking, Mrs. Tommy back in the log home, was thinking of the same thing.

Tommy had no more than slipped out of the front door of the house early that morning before Bingy Bat fluttered in.

"That's about my last trip for food," he said to himself as he fluttered over to the darkest corner and hung himself up. "It's getting far too cold for comfort. I'll soon say good-by for the winter." And before Mrs. Tommy could get over her surprise enough to ask a question, he was sound asleep.

Pretty soon Tommy came in, all excited and wondering about the winter.

"Bingy Bat's going somewhere," said Mrs. Tommy. "At any rate he said something about saying good-by."

"And Billy Robin's going down South," said Tommy. "He told me so. I wonder if the garden is n't a good place to stay in winter. Maybe we ought to move back into the cellar for a while."

"Ugh!" cried Mrs. Tommy with a shiver, "don't say cellar to me. I'd rather freeze than live in that cellar again."



"This is my busy day," said Foxy Squirrel

"I wonder how warm this old log stays," said Tommy.
"And I wonder what food we could find in the winter.
If we had ever lived in a garden before, we should know."

"What are you doing now?" he asked as he saw
Mrs. Tommy dashing out of the front door.

"I'm going to ask advice of all our friends," she said.

"And then?" asked Tommy.

"And then I shall decide to do exactly as I please,"
she replied. "That's the way to use advice, to be sure."

Tommy followed close at her heels, as she knew he
would. Usually Tommy liked to lead, but when it

came to home making he was quite content to do as she said.

They ran around the log, hid under some dry crackly leaves, and waited for some one to pass by. How long they did wait, too! Not much like the busy summer when friends ran hither and yon all day long.

Pretty soon they spied Foxy Squirrel.

"Foxy! Foxy Squirrel!" called Tommy. "Come over and talk to us. We want some advice."

"Sorry," replied Foxy, "but this is my busy day. Did n't you feel the frost last night? It just dropped acorns by the hundred, and I have to get a good supply put away for winter."

"That's what we want to talk to you about," said Tommy, "about winter. Will you stay here? And what will you eat?"

"To be sure, I'll stay here," said Foxy. "My little mate has been working these many days, and she has the nest all snug and tight so no storm can get in. And we have made and filled a big pantry full of nuts just over the nest so we can have plenty of food on stormy days. Then we are working now to bury nuts, oh, lots of nuts and acorns, here and there in the ground, so we can come out on fine days and eat those and not use up too soon the ones we have in the pantry."



"Oh, good morning, Mrs. Spider," said Mrs. Tommy

"But how can you find the places where you have buried nuts?" asked Tommy as he watched Foxy scratch a hole, stick in a few nuts, then scratch another and another hole.

"Such a silly question!" exclaimed Foxy. "I don't have to find them. I just know without hunting. It's part of my business to know."

"Why don't you stay where you are?" he added.
"Have n't you laid up food for the winter?"

"Not a bit," said Tommy, much ashamed. "We never thought about it."

"Well, well," said Foxy, "you'd better get at it." And he hurried off to go on with his work.

While the mice were looking after Foxy a long silken thread blew across the leaves in front of them and, at the end of the thread, they saw Mrs. Spider spinning as busily as possible.

"Oh, good morning, Mrs. Spider," said Mrs. Tommy, "can you tell us how to spend the winter?"

"You've come to the right person this time," answered Mrs. Spider cordially. "There is only one safe, good way to spend a winter. Do as I do. I roll myself into a tight little ball, cover myself with a silky waterproof covering, and hide under the shelter of some leaves. That's the way to spend a winter."

Without waiting for further talk Mrs. Spider said, "But you'll have to excuse me. This is my busy day and I can't visit any more."

"Something tells me that I should n't like being rolled up in a ball all winter," said Mrs. Tommy thoughtfully, "and even if I wanted to, I should n't know how to spin a silky waterproof covering. I don't believe Mrs. Spider knows much about mice."

"I know what we ought to do," suggested Tommy suddenly. "Why didn't I think of it before? We must ask Mr. Garden Toad what he is going to do. He knows a lot."

So the two little mice scurried over to where the toad was usually to be found.

It took a long time to find him, and when he was found the poor old fellow seemed too sleepy to talk or think. He blinked his eyes very slowly and looked at his visitors.

"Anything I can do for you, Tommy?" he asked, "do for you, do—for—you? I hope it won't be hard, my joints are getting stiff, very—stiff, very—s-t-i-f-f."

"Tell us what to do for winter," said Tommy.

"You can't do anything for winter," croaked the toad, "I only wish you could, could—could. Winter just comes and stays, stays—stays."

"Oh, I didn't mean that," laughed Tommy, "I meant what shall we do while winter is here. Shall we stay in the log? What will you do?"

That question waked the toad up and he explained to the mice just where he would live.

"See that dahlia bed back there?" he asked. "Well, when the folks took the bulbs out the other day, they left a lot of big holes. I've fixed one round and deep and just to my liking. And every storm blows leaves and more leaves to make a covering. One of these fine days I shall crawl into that hole and there I shall sleep the long, cold winter. I tell you I need a rest, need a rest — need — a — rest, I do."

Very stiffly he hopped two big hops, three little hops, turned over sidewise, and slipped into a hole, just to show the mice how it might be done.

"So he stays right here," said Mrs. Tommy. "I have a notion to stay in the garden myself. But goodness, this is n't getting anything to eat!"

That was a warm, sunny day, one of the last warm days of the fall. When the two little mice crept home later, as the sun slipped down to early bedtime, the old log home was warm and comfortable, so warm and so comfortable that Bingy Bat had begun to wake up and stir.



They stuffed up the cracks to keep out the cold

"O Bingy," cried Mrs. Tommy as she slipped in and saw him, "tell me quickly, what do you do for winter?"

Bingy Bat stretched his wings, shook himself, and smiled at his cousin.

"Winter does n't worry me much, for I sleep all the time," he answered. "Some cold morning I'll just come in and hang myself up as usual, and there I'll sleep the whole winter through. I won't bother you at all."

"But how will you eat?" asked Tommy.

"I won't eat," said the bat. "I'm trying to get fat now, and all the long winter I'll live on the fat I have under my skin."

"I'd noticed you were getting so fat you could hardly fly straight," suggested Mrs. Tommy, "but I didn't like to say anything about it for fear it would make you feel bad."

"Feel bad, fiddlesticks!" grumbled the bat, "when I work all the night to get fat! And hard work it is these days, too, when the frost has killed the insects and hardly a morsel can I find. I'll go out tonight because this day was warm and sunny. Then that will be my last. Tomorrow I shall go to sleep. And how glad I shall be for the long winter's rest! Good-by for the last time," he said as he fluttered out of the door.

Left by themselves, the two little mice looked at each other thoughtfully. Tommy did n't like to speak first, because he wanted his little mate to decide. And she seemed to have much to think of.

Finally she said, "Tommy, let's stay in the old log. We can work real hard for a few days and bring corn from the chicken house to have on hand during a bad storm. And of course if it gets too dreadfully cold, we can creep into the cellar. But if Bingy Bat can sleep here, we ought to be able to live here. And I do hate to move."

That suited Tommy. So the mice set to work. They brought cotton and soft bits to stuff up cracks to keep out the cold. They stored corn till the passage was full. They made ready every way they knew.

And all the time the days grew colder and colder, and more and more the creatures disappeared from the garden, till one morning Tommy peeked out on a snow-white garden. Winter had come.

"Now we're in for a lonesome time," thought Tommy bravely.

Funny, wasn't it? But he never once guessed all the exciting adventures he and his mate would have before spring came again to the garden home.



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